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COMMISSIONER ADDRESSES SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Louisiana's Commissioner of Higher Education, E. Joseph Savoie, asked school personnel administrators to make certain that the teachers they hire for Louisiana's classrooms "like children and understand the moral calling of this profession." Savoie made these comments as he addressed the Louisiana State Association of School Personnel Administrators during their conference in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

"We are working hard to ensure that our universities, who educate the teachers you hire, are fully preparing them for the realities of Louisiana's classrooms. Our students, many who live in distressed environments, have needs and challenges that can be addressed. We have to engage the disengaged and be successful in doing this," Savoie said.

The Commissioner informed the audience of almost 100 Louisiana school personnel officials about the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission of Teacher Quality to address the way Louisiana recruits, prepares and retains teachers. In addition, he discussed the work of the Board of Regents in overseeing the redesign of teacher education curricula at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Board of Regents and the Department of Education are working to enhance alternative certification, this allows persons with college degrees to receive intensive, high-quality training in order to teach in our state. In addition, the Governor's Office and the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Board of Regents, are using technology to assist in the recruitment of teachers

through the newly developed Teach Louisiana web site and by piloting a program using the web to provide students with uncertified teachers access to certified teachers.

“Leaders across the country are beginning to notice our efforts. Our challenge is to sustain this momentum beyond the term of our current political leaders. We must stay on task if we want our reform efforts to fully take root and last,” Savoie said.

In addition to discussing teacher education, Savoie highlighted the state’s efforts in postsecondary education reform which began with the restructuring of the current system and the formation of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

“We are now working to institutionalize these reform efforts through the implementation of the state’s Master Plan. This blue print will guide the work of all of our institutions in directly addressing the needs of our students and our communities. The plan focuses on increased student access and success.”

The Master Plan includes the requirement of new admission standards for our four-year universities to be implemented by 2005. The Board of Regents is currently working to ensure that all students are aware of the new changes, particularly this year’s 9th graders, the first to be fully affected by the new standards.